



# FACT SHEET: Mountain Lions

May 2015

## Background

Mountain lions, also known as “pumas” and “cougars” are large powerful predators that have an important role in the ecosystem. Their primary food source is deer, but they can also prey on smaller animals like raccoons, rabbits, domestic pets and livestock. More than half of California, including most of undeveloped San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, is prime mountain lion habitat. Mountain lions are a specially protected species in California.

## Identification

The mountain lion has a small head and small rounded ears. It has a very long tail that is about 2/3rds the length of its body.

- **Color:** Generally tan, but can range from gray to brown, with a whitish underside. The ears and tail are tipped with black. Cubs have camouflage spots that fade as they mature.
- **Size:** Adult males can reach 8 feet in length from nose to tail; and weigh 130-150 lbs. Adult females can reach up to 7 feet in length and weigh 65-90 lbs.
- **Tracks:** Unlike a dog, mountain lions don't leave a nail mark and their pads are shaped like an “M”.
- **Behavior:** Adult pumas are solitary and territorial animals. Males can have territories up to 100 square miles and females' territories can range up to 60 square miles. They are most active between dusk and dawn, and generally avoid contact with humans.

## Stay safe in mountain lion country

- Do not hike, bike or jog alone.
- Avoid hiking or jogging when mountain lions are most active – dawn, dusk, and at night.
- Keep a close watch on small children.
- Do not wear headphones.

## If you encounter a mountain lion...

- Do not approach a mountain lion, it may feel cornered if you approach it.
- Don't turn your back or run, which might trigger a chase response.
- Stand tall, face the animal, make noise and try to look bigger by waving your arms or throwing objects.
- Without bending over, pick up small children.
- *If attacked, fight back.*

## REPORT ALL ENCOUNTERS OR ATTACKS IMMEDIATELY

If a human is attacked by a mountain lion, call 911. If you have a face-to-face encounter with a mountain lion, contact a ranger or call the District office at (650) 691-1200 during regular business hours. On weekends or after 5:00 PM on weekdays, call (650) 903-6395.



Mountain Lion  
— 7-8 feet —



Bobcat  
— 3 feet —



Domestic Cat  
— 2 feet —



Human  
6 feet tall

# FACT SHEET: Mountain Lions, cont.

## Keep mountain lions away from your home

- **Do Not Feed Wildlife.** This includes deer, raccoons, and other wildlife that are mountain lion prey.
- **“Deer-Proof” Your Landscape.** Landscape your yard with plants that deer do not like to eat.
- **Trim brush to reduce hiding places for mountain lions.**
- **Keep Your Pets Safe.** Keep your pets indoors, especially at night. Bring pet food inside.
- **Keep Livestock Secure.** Keep livestock in enclosed sheds and barns at night, and be sure to secure all outbuildings.
- **Install Outdoor Lighting.** Motion or timer-activated outdoor lighting around your home and animal enclosures may keep mountain lions away.
- **Remove Garbage.**

## Response Protocol

In case of an attack or incident, the District will immediately notify the California Department of Fish and Wildlife and the local law enforcement agency. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife has the ultimate authority for dealing with wildlife in the state, including the authority for the removal of aggressive wildlife. The District will then begin an investigation to assess the circumstances of the incident, the behavior of the animal, and what steps are necessary to protect the public. A preserve, or a portion thereof, may be closed immediately for public safety, investigation purposes and tracking of the aggressive animal. Preserve neighbors, nearby land management agencies and local jurisdictions may also be notified.

## For more information, visit:

### California Department of Fish and Wildlife

[www.wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Lion](http://www.wildlife.ca.gov/Keep-Me-Wild/Lion)

### Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District mountain lion web page

[www.openspace.org/preserves/highlight\\_mountain\\_lions.asp](http://www.openspace.org/preserves/highlight_mountain_lions.asp)

### Bay Area Puma Project

[www.bapp.org](http://www.bapp.org)

## About the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District

Created by voter initiative in 1972, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District has successfully protected more than 63,000 acres of open space in San Mateo, Santa Clara and a small portion of Santa Cruz counties. Midpen’s mission is to acquire and preserve a regional greenbelt of open space and agricultural land of regional significance in perpetuity, protect and restore the natural environment, and provide opportunities for ecologically-sensitive public enjoyment and education. Currently, Midpen protects 90 rare native species in 26 unique preserves with over 225 miles of publicly-accessible trails. Two million visits are made to Midpen preserves annually.

[www.openspace.org](http://www.openspace.org)

*Some text has been adapted from information provided by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.*